



# Department of Justice



## DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

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### **INTERNATIONAL BLACK TAR HEROIN TRAFFICKING GROUP DISMANTLED**

#### ***‘Operation Black Gold Rush’ Leads to 138 Arrests in 15 Cities***

WASHINGTON – More than 130 defendants have been indicted and hundreds of thousands of dollars seized as part of an international operation targeting the trafficking of black tar heroin in the United States, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division, Administrator Karen P. Tandy for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and Stuart Nash, Director of the Justice Department’s Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force, announced today.

The multi-state investigation, called “Operation Black Gold Rush,” included arrests in 15 U.S. cities and 10 indictments in eight federal judicial districts, along with state charges. More than 17 kilograms of black tar heroin—a potent form of heroin that is dark and sticky in appearance—were also seized in the operation.

As of today, a total of 138 people have been arrested on federal and state charges in connection with the operation. In the Southern District of Indiana, an indictment charged 13 defendants with conspiracy to distribute one kilogram or more of heroin. Additionally, 15 individuals have been charged in the state of Indiana, 28 individuals have been arrested and indicted in Ohio, 47 individuals in Tennessee, seven in Colorado and 11 individuals in North Carolina. On Aug. 2, 2006, a federal grand jury in the District of South Carolina returned two indictments charging 26 individuals with drug-related offenses.

“This operation demonstrates that the Department of Justice is as committed as ever to eradicating the flood of illegal and dangerous narcotics like black tar heroin,” said Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division. “Law enforcement across the country will continue to work diligently to shut down these operations and keep our neighborhoods free of the poison being spread by these criminals.”

“Operation Black Gold Rush exposed a network of over 100 illegal aliens who controlled a pipeline of heroin operating from Nayarit, Mexico to Nashville, Tennessee and at least 14 cities in between,” said DEA Administrator Karen P. Tandy. “Today, DEA ruptured that pipeline, stopping the flow of heroin to our streets.”

“Operation Black Gold Rush” started with a single seizure of heroin. This DEA-led investigation, which began in November 2005, involved the cooperative efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. Members of the trafficking organization charged in the indictments are alleged to have been responsible for importing and distributing approximately eight kilograms of black tar heroin monthly from Mexico into the United States—which could be sold at an estimated street value of more than \$2 million. The organization allegedly used illegal aliens as couriers, who were part of a “call and deliver” system of drug distribution whereby a customer could have his heroin literally delivered to the front door. The illicit proceeds were allegedly laundered by the organization’s financial managers using a combination of wire remitters and bulk currency transport.

To date, the government has seized more than \$500,000 in cash representing illegal proceeds from this operation—\$260,000 prior to today and \$250,000 today alone.

“Operation Black Gold Rush” is a joint investigation involving operations in 15 cities—Nashville, Memphis and Knoxville in Tennessee; Indianapolis; Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio; Denver; Los Angeles and Riverside, California; Charlotte, North Carolina; Columbia, Greenville, Charleston and Florence in South Carolina; and Phoenix, Arizona. The investigation also involved eight U.S. Attorney’s Offices, the Criminal Division’s Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section, Special Operations Division, and the Justice Department’s Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force, along with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Internal Revenue Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and various state and local law enforcement agencies.

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